

Treasure Chest
Environmental Print and the Letter Wall
Environmental Print-Rich Classroom Charts & Routines

In an environmental print-rich classroom, children begin to learn that letters make specific sounds, and they begin to recognize letters (and even words!). Assigning jobs on the Helper Chart, reviewing the class schedule, and reading the class calendar also provide excellent opportunities for teachers to integrate letter knowledge activities. Below are instructions for making and introducing environmental print-rich charts and routines to your classroom.

Helper Chart

Children enjoy helping out; it gives them the opportunity to engage in and take responsibility for their classroom. But remember as you brainstorm jobs for your Helper Chart: it is only useful for every child to have a job if every child has a *meaningful* job.

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Poster board
- Velcro® (or paper and staples to make pockets)

Instructions:

1. Gather the materials listed above. Work with the children to create a list of ways that they might help in the classroom. You might say, "I need some help getting things done in the classroom. Let's think together about some jobs that you could do to help me."
 - Have the children brainstorm jobs.
 - Write down their suggestions.
2. After class, make the Helper Chart:
 - Come up with a system for rotating jobs so that each child will have a chance to do each job.
 - The rotation system should not be based on behavior or performance.
 - If possible, every child should always have a job.
 - List each job with a picture icon.
 - Make a laminated name card for each child (with a picture).
 - Helpers will place their name card next to their job title. (The name card can be adhered using Velcro® or by making little pockets out of paper.)
3. Introduce the Helper Chart to the children, and teach them how to use it!

Daily Schedule Chart

With a consistent daily schedule posted in the classroom, children know what to expect and have a visual plan to refer to throughout the day.

Materials:

- Poster board (or Pocket Chart)
- Markers

Instructions:

1. List each activity and the time it begins. Make sure to use pictures or icons next to each activity so that preliterate children can recognize and remember them on their own. These icons could be photographs of the children doing each activity.
2. Introduce the chart during circle time. Throughout the day, as activities change, draw attention to the chart and ask the children, "What do we do next?"

Labels in the Classroom

Children learn to recognize letters and words by seeing them over and over again in different contexts. The letters become a part of the child's visual memory. Room labels provide excellent opportunities to develop children's early letter knowledge skills.

Materials:

- Paper or poster board
- Markers

Instructions:

1. Involve children in labeling the room during the first weeks of school (rather than having everything labeled before school begins).
2. Write a few new labels each day. Talk about the words and letters as you write out the label.
3. Label large objects, such as doors, tables, and chairs.
4. Label supplies, such as writing caddy, paper, blocks, and books. Talk about the labels at circle time and cleanup time.
5. Label individual cubbies with the children's names. Use a picture of each child next to his or her name at the beginning of the year.
6. Label the place where each child sits (if each child sits in the same place every day).

Calendar

A calendar activity can become part of the everyday circle time routine. Since time concepts are difficult for young children, limit calendar time activity to 3-5 minutes. The calendar should be at eye level to allow for child involvement.

Materials:

- Poster board
- Calendar numbers
- Pointer

Instructions:

1. Teacher posts a large calendar near the circle time area.
2. Teacher reviews the name of the month and the day of the week with the whole class.
3. The Calendar Helper counts and point to each number with a pointer. Then he or she places the new number on the calendar.

Variations:

- Special events, such as birthdays, field trips, and holidays, could be added to the calendar.
- Emphasize patterns: place calendar numbers on different shapes, colors, or die cuts to form a pattern (e.g., circle, square, circle, square, or pumpkin, bat, pumpkin, bat.)

Weather Chart

Materials:

- Poster board
- Markers

Instructions:

1. The teacher posts a weather chart near the circle time area.
2. Include weather words, such as “sunny,” “rainy,” “cold,” “cloudy,” “hot,” “windy,” etc. Use icons to illustrate the weather words.
3. The Weather Person places the weather icon for the day’s weather on the chart and tells about the weather (e.g., “The weather today is...”).

Extension:

- Children could graph the type of weather daily.